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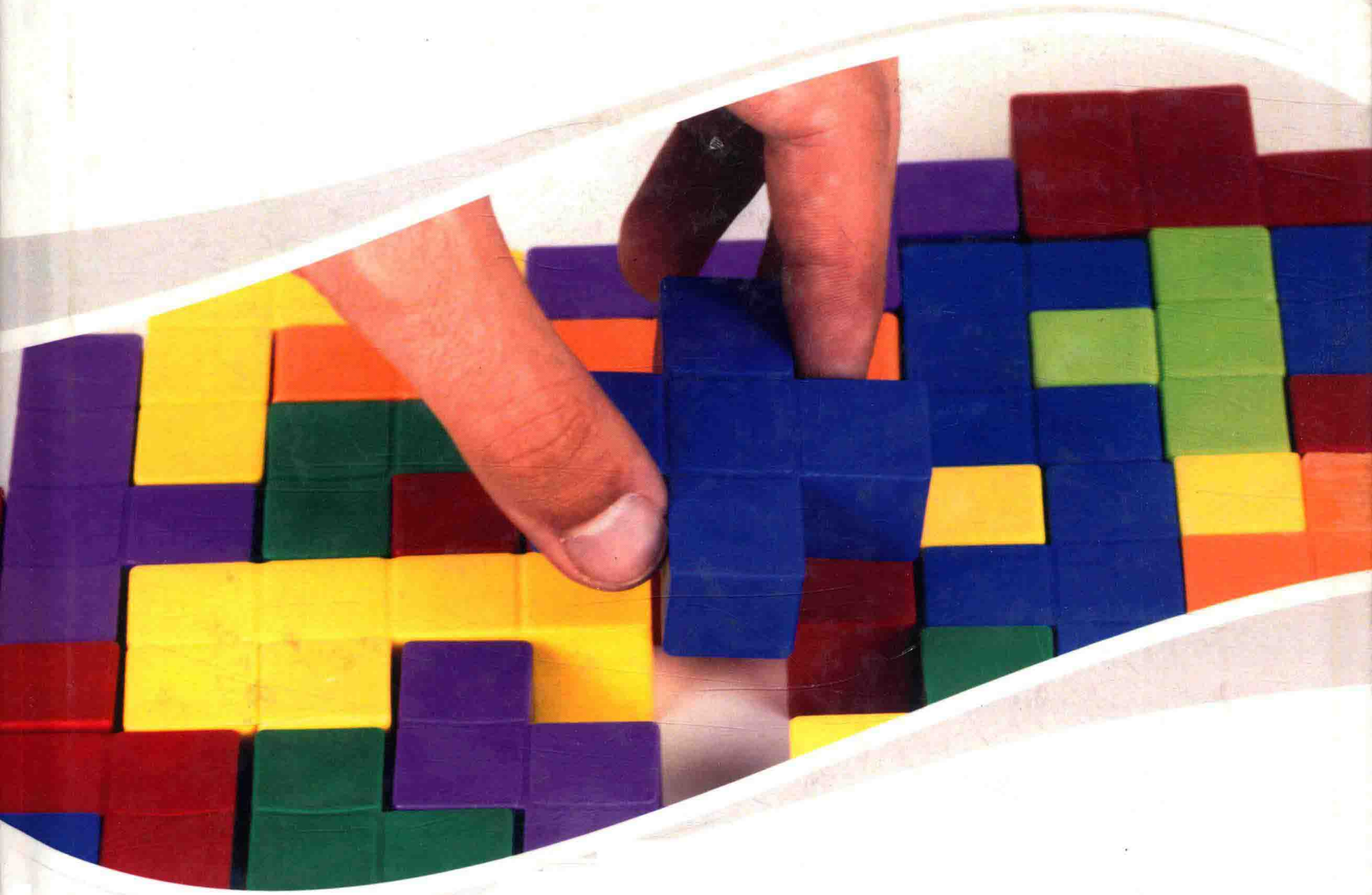

Yousif Al-Bastaki and Amani Shajera

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Building a Competitive Public Sector with Knowledge Management Strategy

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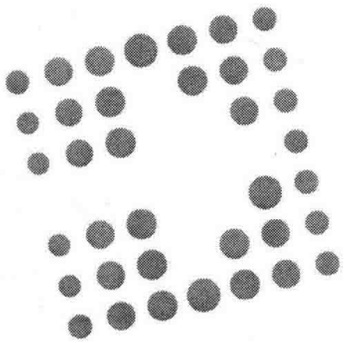

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Preface

Today, knowledge management has become an agenda issue for various academic and professional journals. It is widely accepted to be a significant source of competitive advantage. Although the study of knowledge is as old as human history, it has only been recognized in the last two decades as being a crucial factor for organizational success. Knowledge management has gained much attention from both academics and practitioners; however, as a discipline, it is still in its infancy, especially in the public sector.

Unfortunately, public sector organizations that use knowledge management practices without thorough knowledge and awareness of them will fail to reap their true and full benefits. Therefore, it is vital for an organization to understand the concept of knowledge management and to align its knowledge management strategy with the organization's strategy when starting a knowledge management initiative in order to succeed.

Successful implementation and the practicing of Knowledge Management (KM) in the public sector improves organizational performance through increased efficiency, productivity, quality, and innovation; ultimately, KM helps organizations to make better decisions, streamline processes, reduce re-work, whilst also increasing data integrity and greater collaboration by increasing access to their employees' knowledge.

The materials included in this book cover and explore the different concepts, factors, strategies, and practices that lead to the most effective and efficient ways of utilizing, managing, and sustaining knowledge management in public sector organizations.

The prospective audiences for this book include researchers, academics, practitioners, and students from different fields of research, such as knowledge management, organizational performance, public administration, information technology, and change management.

This book will increase KM awareness in the public sector by providing a clear direction for the effective implementation of KM programs, which could improve organizational learning and performance excellence. In this sense, the intended audience includes public sector employees at various levels, any policy makers already working in the public sector, or those considering working in this field.

Chapter one proposes a new paradigm—knowledge manageability—in which knowledge management does not attempt to change an organization's work processes or cultural norms, but rather adapts its principles and practices to the existing organizational context. The paradigm uses the Cynefin sensemaking framework as a foundation for knowledge manageability. Four knowledge manageability regimes are described: authoritative hierarchy, organizational structure, negotiated agreements, and responsible autonomy.

The chapter also describes methods for transferring knowledge across the regions from creation to application. The knowledge manageability framework encompasses a spectrum from dynamic, unstructured organizational environments to relatively inflexible, highly structured environments. It provides a robust, multi-dimensional framework for managing knowledge and knowledge work across diverse organizational contexts. By avoiding the need to change inherently structured culture and work processes, it greatly reduces the challenges associated with implementing knowledge management in public sector organizations. Knowledge manageability represents a significant and useful extension of existing approaches to managing organizational knowledge in any bureaucratic organization, whether in the public or private sector.

Chapter two aims to convey a comprehensive understanding of knowledge management applications to the public sector, and through case studies recognizes the initiatives of knowledge management in the Indian public sector. With a brief introduction to the emergence of KM in the globalized world and the need for it in the public sector, this chapter focuses on understanding and reviewing the conceptual application of KM in the public sector in India. It also delves into the meaning, need, process, steps, and implementation approaches of knowledge management in an attempt to identify the various dimensions of KM in the public sector.

Chapter three assesses the reliability and predictability of government departments as partners in corporate knowledge management systems. The specific topic is knowledge availability under the US Freedom of Information Act, but the general implications apply to governments at all levels around the world that hold business information, data, or knowledge assets.

By comparing processes related to US Freedom of Information requests across departments and across time, separated by a dramatic change in presidential administrations and attitudes toward governmental openness, this study examines the relative reliability of agency processes. In particular, reports on the handling of confidential business information provide us with specific insights into this topic, as do reports on records with personal privacy concerns.

Chapter four aims to explore the factors that affect organizational readiness for knowledge management, in particular, in public sector organizations in Bahrain. Research indicated that culture (collaboration, trust, and learning), structure (centralization, formalization, and rewards systems), and IT infrastructure (IT support) all provide a sound basis through which organizations can assess their readiness for KM.

This chapter has extended knowledge in KM, especially concerning the need for consideration of organizational readiness before embracing KM. The study contributed by providing an instrument for assessing organizational readiness. It serves as a guideline for leaders and helps them to ensure that essential preliminary factors and variables are promoted and covered when they start KM implementation within their organizations.

Chapter five aims to provide an approach for building a supportive organizational culture for sustained organizational learning in public sectors. Changing a culture is not an easy task. It involves an in-depth understanding about culture and its relationship with organizational learning. Therefore, this chapter provides a brief introduction to organizational learning, organizational culture, and their relationship. Then, characteristics and attributes of a learning culture are identified. This chapter presents an approach for identifying the present culture of an organization and changing it to a learning culture by using case study research findings of a public sector construction organization operating in Sri Lanka.

Chapter six explores the role of knowledge management and knowledge workers in a public sector organization through the broader perspective of aiming to achieve E-Government orientation in Malaysia. The primary focus of this preliminary study emphasizes the use of technology resources to leverage the experiences, ideas, and expertise of an organization's employees (knowledge resources) for the embedded knowledge assets.

This chapter first examines the organizational readiness in technology resources and identifies the perceived benefits and challenges of using KM as a strategic management tool to improve the internal operational efficiency and electronic service delivery system for E-Government in a selected knowledge-intensive accounting organization in Malaysia. The research conducted for this study examined and identified the critical factors for a KM implementation strategy that should be adopted by a public sector accounting organization in Malaysia when changing to E-Government for knowledge-based products and services.

Chapter seven aims to increase understanding and management of knowledge management in public sector organizations. In this chapter, the knowledge-management-based assessment and development process of organizational renewal capability is presented and demonstrated in one large municipal (city) organization. It thereby contributes to the discussion on the importance of organizational renewal capability and the performance excellence of public sector organizations in general. The development process of organizational renewal capability provides an approach and methods regarding how organizations can identify the current state of their renewal enabling factors and the related knowledge processes in order to initiate sustained renewal. Thereby, they can learn to utilize and manage their key knowledge processes by viewing their organization as a developing knowledge system.

Chapter eight explores various knowledge indicators at an organizational level, presents a knowledge assessment framework with accompanying research probes, and discusses avenues for future research. The motivation for this research rests in exploring more effective ways of assessing and managing knowledge at the organizational level. This was achieved by using knowledge management to derive a conceptual framework and operationalize it using two exploratory case studies in the private sector.

The primary aim of this chapter is to operationalize a Knowledge Assessment Framework (KAF) using case studies. The development of the KAF is important for the public sector for three reasons. Firstly, the use of knowledge assessment allows firms to pinpoint knowledge gaps. Secondly, it allows firms to manage knowledge more effectively. Thirdly, it gives public sector organizations a diagnostic tool with which to gauge their knowledge base. The effective management of knowledge can be considered a competency that enables a greater level of service to be extracted from other resources within the organization.

Chapter nine focuses on an exploratory study from an operational perspective, investigating the role of KM in the UK public sector, the case setting being within council waste services. Key literary findings outline that while the UK Government seeks to improve council service delivery, significant legacies remain from earlier change programs, which appear to be restricting the Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA).

In this chapter, it is obvious that KM as a concept is not fully appreciated within local councils and KM initiatives are not being implemented for change management and business improvement. For organizations to realize their true potential, strong KM—incorporating information, technology, people, and processes—must be embedded into organizational culture, so it becomes routine and the norm. Only then can change within an organization become transformational.

Chapter ten argues the connection between successful knowledge management implementation and a robust change management platform. The framework emanating from the platform is that of four levers: mobilization, communication, infrastructure, and sustainability. The content examines utilization of the four levers in overcoming the barriers to knowledge management systems and promoting commitment to their success. This chapter presents the four leverages for implementing knowledge management in the public sector within a framework of change management. The impetus for this implementation is the promotion of knowledge management as a conduit for turning information into intelligence in the learning, successful public sector organization.

Chapter eleven investigates enabling factors that promote knowledge sharing among employees in the workplace with the aim of increasing understanding of the issue. Specifically, the research has addressed why employees seek knowledge from other sources, and the factors that motivate employees to share knowledge in the workplace. This chapter will help practitioners to understand what interventions to make in their organization to create a knowledge sharing culture and develop a successful knowledge management system. Such local research will also have a theoretical contribution to extending existing knowledge sharing theory across different socio-economic contexts.

Chapter twelve discusses how public sector knowledge workers can utilize their social capital to create value for their organization. The chapter presents a task-based knowledge collaboration model to improve performance and innovation capability of public sector organizations. The model suggests that public sector organizations should support and encourage cross-organizational knowledge collaboration through informal (personal) networking of employees.

Chapter thirteen aims to investigate the relationship between knowledge management processes and competitive advantage in local authorities in Malaysia, to raise the awareness of the importance of managing organizational knowledge, particularly in the public sector. Analysis of the study suggests that six knowledge management processes (knowledge creation, capture, organization, storage, dissemination, and application) have a strong relationship with competitive advantage. This study is expected to raise awareness and provide initial guidelines to local authorities as knowledge-intensive institutions on how to formulate strategies to manage the knowledge management processes within the organization.

Chapter fourteen presents the development of a project story capturing system that assists the knowledge capturer to capture knowledge from experienced project members in the form of storytelling via interviews. The knowledge capturer captures the experts' stories concerning lessons learned, solutions to problems, and insights to issues and conflicts that might emerge during project implementation. The system is equipped with other features such as comments and tags to encourage interaction between members of the project team.

The stories told by the experienced project team members are monitored and guided so that the stories are related, appropriate, and knowledge-worthy. The tacit knowledge is captured and stored in repositories so that it can be used in future government projects.

Chapter fifteen presents an initial insight into the little-researched phenomenon of how Knowledge Management Systems (KMSs) can support decision-making processes in organizations. This chapter proposes a framework, "USUQ," that will benefit managers in both public and private sectors through knowing how the Usage, Satisfaction, Usefulness, and the Quality of a KMS can support decision-making processes.

This chapter reveals that KMSs are used to support operational decisions more than strategic and tactical decisions. The study indicates that KMSs improve and create high-quality decisions, and can support unstructured and semi-structured decisions. KMSs are flexible, can minimize errors, and provide appropriate help when the decision maker has problems. This study offers insights into assessing the usage of KMSs in supporting decision-making processes in organizations and can help public sectors in analyzing the same.

Chapter sixteen refers to different issues that public institutions must face to be able to generate knowledge from spatial data in order to support decision-making processes. This chapter looked for answers to several aspects: what tools are available for non-expert users to handle spatial data, who will provide spatial and related conventional data to stakeholders interested in analyzing such, and how is it possible to ensure data quality?

This chapter presents work related to business intelligence and different approaches for its spatial extension, as well as a platform to provide spatial data to stakeholders. Public institutions may be able to provide, share, and consume spatial data and the related conventional data to better support their decisions. In this way, information literacy can be improved and governments can be leaders in building a new society based on information and knowledge.

Chapter seventeen explores how strategy maps shape the strategy processes, mobilizing knowledge across boundaries. This chapter investigates the use of interactive strategy maps in strategy knowledge formation in a university setting. In particular, the chapter draws attention to the cognitive benefits of strategy maps, emphasizing the fact that they allow strategists to make strategic reasoning more explicit, holistic, and interactive.

The findings of the chapter suggest that strategy maps are material objects that play a central role in the reflective practices of people involved in strategy work, as they shape a holistic combination and an innovative generation of the strategic contents. Moreover, the study found that the use of visual representations impacts not only the efficiency of decision making, but also individual and organizational learning, moving from exploitation to exploration of knowledge.

Chapter eighteen presents some of the most important results of a study conducted in two departments within the Catalan public administration sector. This study enabled authors to present proposals aimed at improving the dynamics of the Communities of Practice (CoP) in public administration, and to suggest possible avenues of research focused on improving the functioning of the public sector.

This study presents knowledge management as one of the organizational strategies that enables organizations to foster learning processes, and Communities of Practice as an instrument for the effective development of knowledge management. This chapter adds to the understanding of CoPs in the public administration by providing well-grounded intervention strategies. The chapter also shows that the design, implementation, and survival of CoPs in organizations must consider not only factors directly linked to the development of the CoP, but also a host of organizational factors, other factors linked to the personal characteristics of the participants, and how the final results will be used.

Chapter nineteen presents the fundamental concepts of knowledge management, especially as conceptualized in the African context, and paves the way for the design of a framework commensurate to the dynamic environment of the African continent. The chapter presents key concepts of knowledge management and probes whether the desired levels of knowledge management development have been reached to guarantee effective participation in the global knowledge value chains.

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This conceptual chapter emanates from an extensive literature and document review on the different interventions and strategies for KM development. Using South Africa as a case, the chapter presents the ramifications that occur with regard to KM design and implementation. The chapter provides "semiotic" analysis of the synergy between different KM interventions propagated by the governments and/or co-operating partners and actual realization of a knowledge economy.

Chapter twenty describes two case studies involving knowledge management of a public sector construction project for two universities in Finland. There were many different stakeholders involved in the projects. Although much effort was put into the project during the initial stages, the projects' starts were delayed.

This chapter gives underlying reasons for the delays and then proposes an approach where co-creation of value for knowledge integration can be used to overcome problems with conflicting interests of stakeholders. The other example introduces a small project where the initiator is a facility owner. This study shows how the selection of the stakeholders for decision-making was a challenge.

This book expands on the current understanding of knowledge management in the public sector by exploring and investigating various factors and considering how they relate to the success of KM. An integrated and coherent book of knowledge management has been created that adds value to the current research and contributes to a better understanding of the factors that influence successful knowledge management in organizations, specifically in the public sector.

This publication plays a significant role in addressing the key issues, challenges, and opportunities of knowledge management by increasing awareness in the public sector in a systematic and holistic way for both individuals and organizations. It also provides a clear direction for the effective implementation of KM initiatives for improving organizational learning and performance excellence.

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This chapter focuses on an exploratory study from an operational perspective, investigating the role of KM in the UK public sector, the case setting being within council waste services. Key literary findings outline that while the UK Government seeks to improve council service delivery, significant legacies remain from earlier change programs which appear to be restricting the Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA).

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